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In response to ‘Casually defending the Constitution’

Dear Editor,

In the Thursday, Feb. 20, 2014, edition of The Prairie, Editor Bill Jones wrote an opinion piece titled “Casually defending the Constitution” that contained gross factual errors and prejudiced omissions of the truth. My name is Megan Fox and I’m the woman that Jones alluded to as “the Mokena resident” who discovered ongoing criminal activity in the Orland Park Public Library back in October of last year.

While on a visit there with my daughters, I encountered a man committing disorderly conduct under Village ordinance No. 8-6-1-1 (definition No. 4). According to the statute, he was being “openly lewd” and “doing an act of public indecency tending to debauch the public morals” by arousing himself to pornography on a library computer in full view of passersby. This is against the law in Orland Park. I complained to staff who did nothing to stop it and shrugged off my complaint with “We get a lot of those [guys] in here.”

Unsatisfied with this response, I wrote a letter to the Library Board informing the Trustees of the lewd behavior and disorderly conduct I encountered. Instead of writing or calling me back or addressing this with me, Library Director Mary Weimar contacted Orland Police Chief Tim McCarthy by email and asked him to look through my personal YouTube channel at videos of me singing folk music to find anything he could harass me with. Thus began a several months-long campaign by the Library Board to use the Orland police to intimidate and silence me as a critic so I would no longer complain about the crimes being committed in this Library. These are the same people whom Mr. Jones championed as protective of “free speech” who refuse to hear criticism of their policies.

I obtained the Library’s incident reports through FOIA requests and Orland police reports on crimes being committed in the Library in recent years. What I uncovered is disturbing. The Library’s own internal reports showed child porn being accessed on their computers, men openly fondling themselves lewdly near children, and other crimes some of which went unreported to the police. I urged Chief McCarthy to conduct his own investigation and that resulted in official Police Report #2013-00136850, which identified 22 separate incidents reported at this Library, some of which warranted police intervention. To this day, the Library denies the existence of these reports. However, Dan Proft and Bruce Wolf from 890 WLS-AM ultimately forced Bridget Bittman, Library spokesman, to admit on live radio on Nov. 6, 2013, that child porn was indeed accessed in the Library through their unfiltered internet.

I attended several board meetings to make the trustees aware of the situation. Trustees such as Diane Jennings verbally attacked me during the meetings to shut me up, again restricting my free speech. I caught this all on video and the Board’s actions are now being officially investigated by the Illinois Attorney General’s office in Springfield.

As for my objection to the Feb. 12 illegal meeting the Board held (on Abraham Lincoln’s birthday), the Illinois Open Meetings Act specifically prohibits a public body like the Library Board from meeting on a legal holiday. The General Assembly in our state declared Feb. 12 to
be a legal holiday. Mr. Jones might think it's silly or stupid that Lincoln’s birthday is a legal holiday, but it is. The Library Board clearly broke the law by holding a meeting on this day and did so with the intention of keeping the public away from the most controversial vote they ever cast. They violated the OMA and illegally voted to keep access to any kind of porn flowing in a library full of children.

This point is not “moot” as Mr. Jones claimed because the Open Meetings Act was written to protect the public from government boards run amuck. It is an important law and if found guilty of these violations, the Board members could be charged with a Class-C misdemeanor.

Mr. Jones’ opinion piece attempted to malign me as an interloper from Mokena who has no business criticizing this Library Board for allowing crimes to be committed (and actually committing crimes of its own, regarding those OMA violations). The fact is that the Orland Park Public Library receives federal and state funds and is not supported by the Village of Orland Park as a private country club for the exclusive use of Orland residents, much to Trustee Diane Jennings’ dismay. So whether I live in Mokena or Orland or Transylvania it doesn’t matter. Everyone has a right to speak truth to this Board, and the Library and Mr. Jones don’t have a say in who is allowed to do so.

Never have I seen a more blatant attempt to “kill the messenger” than Mr. Jones’ attack on me in his editorial. It was cowardly of him to print what he did when he never availed himself of opportunities to speak to me and get my story. He never contacted me by email or Facebook or even talked to me at one of the Board meetings we both attended. Instead, he chose to speak only with the Library Board and their spokesman and reprint their talking points to malign and discredit me.

Mr. Jones then chose, for whatever reason, to not inform readers of the Supreme Court case US v. American Library Association in 2003, where the Supreme Court of the United States ruled 6-3 that “public libraries’ use of Internet filtering software does not violate their patrons’ First Amendment rights.” I believe Mr. Jones chose not to write about this landmark case because his entire argument that porn in public is a First Amendment right would have been rendered “moot.” There is no constitutional right to porn in a public library. Period.

Megan Fox

Orland Park Library patron

- See more at: http://www.opprairie.com/letters-editor-1#sthash.Y5wkQKUG.dpuf